



Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
801 North First Street, Room 400
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number:
P.C.11/17/03 Item: 3.m

File Number:
GP03-10-01

Council District and SNI Area:
10 – N/A

Major Thoroughfares Map Number:
155

Assessor's Parcel Number(s):
583-11-009, -010, -011, -032

Project Manager: David Tymn

GENERAL PLAN REPORT

2003 Fall Hearing

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

General Plan amendment request to change the Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation from Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC) to Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) on 6.81 acres.

LOCATION: Southwest side of Almaden Road between Barnes Lane and Grimley Lane.

ACREAGE: 6.81

APPLICANT/OWNER:

Santa Clara Development Company/Various Owners

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE / TRANSPORTATION DIAGRAM DESIGNATION:

Existing Designation: Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC)

Proposed Designation: Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC)

EXISTING ZONING DISTRICT(S): R-1-2 Residence (single-family)

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION(S):

North: Single-Family Residential – Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC)

South: Single-Family Residential – Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC)

East: Single-Family Residential – Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC)

West: Single-Family Residential – Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC)

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS:

Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted on October 28, 2003.

PLANNING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) on 6.81 Acres

Approved by:

Date:

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

CITY COUNCIL ACTION:

CITY DEPARTMENT AND PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED:

- Department of Transportation – The proposed land use change would not result in a long-term traffic impact.
- Santa Clara Valley Water District –The District has no objections to the proposed amendment.
- San Jose Fire Department – The Fire Department indicated that they have no comments on the proposed amendment.
- Valley Transportation Agency – VTA indicated that they have no comments on the proposal.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE:

Numerous written communications from neighborhood residents were received and are attached. The following is a summary of the issues raised by the community:

- The proposed density is not in keeping with the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Higher density housing is not compatible with the existing neighborhood.
- Traffic on Almaden Road is already a problem. It is difficult to turn onto Almaden Road from certain streets at certain times.
- Cars exceed the speed limit on Almaden Road and other streets.
- Area schools have waiting lists and cannot accommodate additional students.
- This area needs a neighborhood park.
- Queensbridge Way should be connected.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a privately initiated General Plan amendment to change the *San Jose 2020 General Plan* Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation from Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC) to Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) on a 6.81-acre site located on the southwest side of Almaden Road between Barnes Lane and Grimley Lane.

The existing General Plan designation, Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC), is typified by single-family homes on 20,000 square foot lots. The proposed Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) land use designation is the next higher residential density range and is typified by 8,000 square foot lots and greater. Approval of this amendment could potentially allow a maximum of approximately 29 units at this site versus approximately 11 units allowed under the existing Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC). These density figures are based on a net acreage figure of approximately 5.8 acres. This takes into account the approximate acreage available for housing development after dedication of the land required for public streets.

GP03-10-01



BACKGROUND

This amendment was originally filed requesting a change to the Land Use Transportation Diagram from Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC) to Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC). The applicant organized community meetings and spoke with area residents and also had several meetings with staff. After hearing concerns from staff and residents regarding the proposed density, the applicant revised the General Plan Amendment to request the next lower density. The amendment now proposes a change from Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC) to Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC).

A Planned Development Rezoning application (PDC03-087) proposing 26 single-family homes on this site was filed on October 10, 2003. The rezoning proposal will be the subject of future Planning Commission and City Council hearings, after City Council review of the General Plan amendment.

Site and Surrounding Uses

The 6.81-acre site is comprised of four existing parcels. Existing uses on the site include single-family homes constructed in approximately the 1940's and 1950's and a restaurant located at the southwest corner of Almaden Road and Grimley Lane (formerly a single-family home that was converted to restaurant use in the 1960's).

The site is surrounded by existing single-family residential neighborhoods consisting of single-story and two story homes. Parcels to the east, west and south range in size from 10,000 to 20,000 square feet and larger. Across Almaden Road to the northeast are existing subdivisions of approximately 8,000 square foot lots.

Almaden Road is designated on the General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram as a Major Collector (60-90 ft.) from Almaden Expressway south.

ANALYSIS

Policy Consistency

The applicant's proposal is consistent with several of the General Plan's Major Strategies, including Growth Management, Housing and Sustainable City. These strategies support the increase of residential densities in appropriate locations, the provision of a variety of housing types for various economic segments of the community, and the efficient use of existing infrastructure in infill, urbanized areas where urban facilities and services are already available. In addition, the proposed General Plan amendment provides an opportunity to increase the housing supply in San Jose through a modest increase in density.

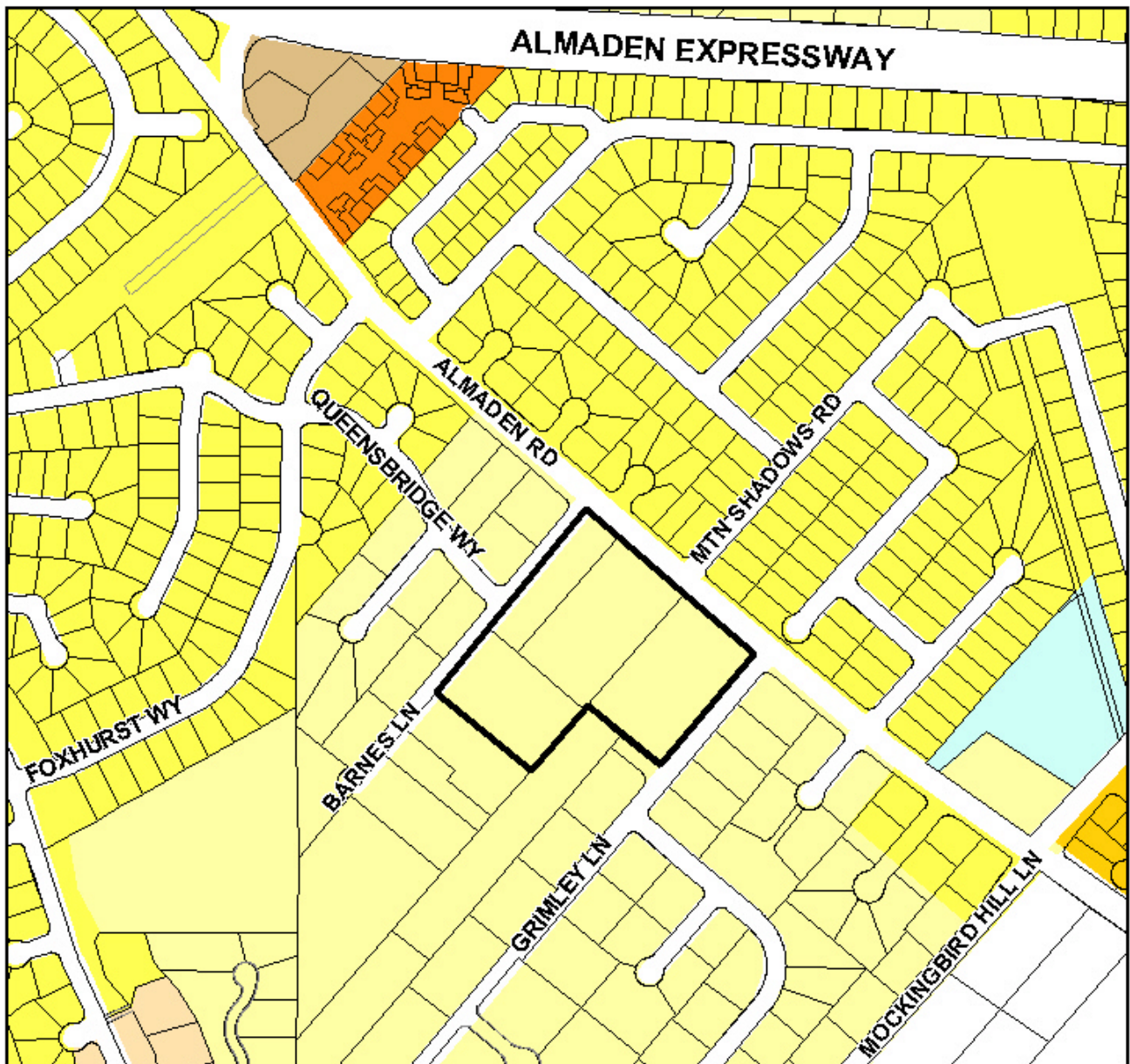
Land Use Compatibility

General Plan Residential Land Use Policy No. 9 states that when changes in residential densities are proposed, the City should consider such factors as neighborhood character and identity, compatibility of land uses and impacts on livability. A key issue with the proposed amendment is the compatibility of a slightly higher residential density on the subject site with the surrounding neighborhood. The surrounding neighborhoods comprise a mix of the Low Density residential (5 DU/AC) and Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC) General Plan designations (see the map of General Plan designations on the following page). The areas immediately adjacent to the east, west and south of the site are designated Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC). Directly across Almaden Road to the northeast is a large area of Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC), reflective of the greater Almaden Valley. The nearest existing areas of Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) on the south western side of Almaden Road are located approximately 400 feet to 500 feet east and west of the site.









It is important to keep in mind that the Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) designation specifies a maximum density of 5 units per acre. In other words, a development that is between 2 and 5 DU/AC would be consistent with this land use designation.

In addition to the Council's action on this General Plan amendment, the pending Planned Development rezoning will be analyzed by Planning staff and subject to additional community meetings and public hearings. This review will address the project's compliance with the General Plan, the Zoning Code, Residential Design Guidelines, and other City policies. "Infill" development on parcels within an existing neighborhood, such as this site, raise many design questions. The documents mentioned above contain policies, codes, and guidelines to ensure compatible development on a site in the context of its surroundings.

GP03-10-01



Department of Planning,
Building and Code
Enforcement
Planning Services Division

-  SITE
-  Very Low Density Residential (2 DU/AC)
-  Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC)
-  Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC)
-  Medium Density Residential (8-16 DU/AC)
-  Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC)
-  Public/Quasi-Public
-  Non-Urban Hillside



Scale 1" = 400'
Quad: 155

The intent of the Residential Design Guidelines is to enhance the quality of existing neighborhoods by promoting new residential development that protects and reinforces the desirable attributes of existing neighborhoods. The Guidelines include development standards that promote:

- The gradual transitions between existing and new development.
- The protection of the privacy of adjacent residents by greater setbacks for 2–story structures.
- The comparable orientation of new development to the existing neighborhood.
- The determination of appropriate building materials and landscaping.

The Residential Design Guidelines emphasize that the architectural design of new development must take into account the single-family character and scale of the surrounding development. While of a slightly higher density, new residential development on the subject site can be designed to appear as a logical extension of the existing neighborhood. New structures should have appropriate architectural design, setbacks (i.e., distances to other structures, sidewalks, etc.), and orientation to the street and other buildings that are comparable to the pattern of development in the surrounding neighborhood. All of these issues will be included in the review of the Planned Development Zoning.

Based on the above discussion, it is staff 's conclusion that the proposed Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) designation is compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Queensbridge Lane Street Connection

Although, not a part of the General Plan Amendment review, there is a street connection issue related to future development of the site that should be discussed. Queensbridge Way is an existing neighborhood street to the northwest of the site. At the eastern edge of the site, a short piece of public street has been constructed, intersecting with Grimley Lane. The City's intent is that this neighborhood street be connected through the site when development occurs to complete the planned street pattern. This is supported by General Plan Urban Design Policy No. 3 which states that residential subdivisions should be designed to provide for internal circulation within neighborhoods and encourage pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods.

Responses from the neighborhood indicate that a majority of the residents do want the street connection completed when development occurs. The Planned Development Rezoning currently on file for the project does include a proposed connection of Queensbridge Way. This was a direct result of input from staff and the community. The final design of the street will be decided as part of review of the Planned Development Zoning.

Environmental Issues

The proposed change in the General Plan land use designation on the subject site was analyzed in an initial study that resulted in a Mitigated Negative Declaration. A traffic analysis was conducted and determined that there is no potential impact to the regional transportation system in the long term as a result of the proposed amendment. As a part of the review of the Planned Development rezoning, more detailed traffic analysis will be required to determine if any mitigation is needed for impacts on local intersections and streets, including issues such as of traffic safety and turning movements.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The property owners and occupants within a 1,000-foot radius were sent a newsletter regarding the two community meetings that were held on October 14 and 15, 2003. They also received a notice of the Mitigated Negative Declaration and a notice of the public hearings to be held on the subject amendment before the Planning Commission on October 17 and City Council on December 16. In addition, the Department's web-site contains information regarding the General Plan process, amendments, staff reports, and hearing schedule. This site is available to any member of the public and contains the most current information regarding the status of the amendments.

In various telephone conversations, approximately four community members expressed concern regarding increased density in the neighborhood. Three additional community meetings were held on June 14, August 11 and November 1, 2003. These meetings were initiated by the applicant and were held at the site. Approximately 50 persons attended the November 1 meeting. The majority of the comments were in opposition to the General Plan Amendment but there were some in favor. Listed below are some of the comments/questions:

- Most residents opposed a density change.
- Residents were worried that there would be cut through traffic on Queensbridge Way if it is connected.
- The proposed density is too high.
- The development on Mockingbird Court and Mockingbird Hill Lane was a good addition to the neighborhood and could be a model for this site.
- They liked the rustic feel of Almaden, but realize that the area will grow.
- They would like a park located within walking distance or on this site.
- The existing site is an "eyesore".
- Many liked the idea of a Planned Development Zoning for the site to retain architectural control.
- There was concern that approval of the proposed amendment would be a precedent for increased density elsewhere in the area.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends approval of the proposed change to the General Plan Land Use designation from Very Low Density (2 DU/AC) to Medium Low Density Residential (5 DU/AC) on the subject 6.81-acre site.

Attachments

PBCE002/GP_Team/2003Annual Review/Staff Reports/Fall Review/GP03-10-01.sr.doc